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81-2

No. _____

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

October Term, 1980

GREY B. MORAN

Petitioner

v.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Respondent

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA

Michael Morchower

Counsel for Petitioner

13 East Franklin Street

Richmond, Virginia 23219

Telephone: (804) 643-0147

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Appendix A: Typewritten Copy of an Order of the Supreme Court of Virginia entered on May 4, 1981, denying petition for appeal.

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

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v.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA, Respondent

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

TO THE SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA

QUESTIONS PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

Can a warrantless search be justified by the "plain view" exception where the discovery of contraband is not inadvertent?

OPINION BELOW

No opinion was rendered by the Supreme Court of Virginia in its denial of the Petitioner's petition for appeal. A typed transcription of that court's order to that effect appears attached hereto as Appendix A.

JURISDICTION

The judgment of the Supreme Court of Virginia sought to be reviewed was entered on May 4, 1981. This Court's jurisdiction is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1257(3).

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS INVOLVED

The provisions of the United States Constitution involved are:

Amendment IV:

> "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall

issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized."

Amendment XIV:

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The evidence at trial, when viewed in the light most favorable to the Commonwealth, revealed that Grey B. Moran (hereinafter, the Petitioner), on October 18, 1979 at approximately 10:00 p.m. arrived at 3006 Fifth Avenue in the City of Richmond. After leaving his vehicle, the Petitioner, a white male, exited the

house accompanied by William E. Brown (hereinafter, Brown), a black male, and drove off with Brown in the Petitioner's car. William H. Wyrick (hereinafter, Wyrick), a Richmond police officer parked across the street, observed this activity and his suspicions were aroused, even though he had no prior information on either man, as a result of a white male entering a black man's home. (Tr. p. 76).

For that reason, Wyrick followed the two men to the corner of Dill Road and Burns Avenue in the City of Richmond where the Petitioner parked his vehicle and entered a house nearby. Upon his return several minutes later, the Petitioner was observed reaching up under the front bumper of his car and pulling out a plastic bag of a type known to Wyrick to be used as a package for marijuana for sale. (Tr. p. 65).

The Petitioner then drove off with Wyrick following behind. Wyrick used his radio to call for assistance and another unit, driven by Officer Acampora (hereinafter, Acampora) of the Richmond Police Department, responded and stopped Moran's vehicle by "waving the car over to the curb". (Tr. p. 98).

Wyrick went to the passenger side of the vehicle and saw Brown drop a plastic bag containing "greenish-brown plant material" to the floorboard of the car. (Tr. p. 66). Brown was then arrested for possession of marijuana. (Tr. p. 68). Wyrick then used his flashlight to examine the grille section of the front of the vehicle and discovered several more bags of contraband. (Tr. p. 69-70). Later, a further search revealed additional bags of marijuana concealed under the rear bumper and elsewhere. At some point

after the discovery of the marijuana located in the front bumper area, Moran was arrested for possession of marijuana with intent to distribute. (Tr. p. 71).

Moran, by counsel, raised the issues presented here by way of a motion to suppress first advanced at his preliminary hearing and later at his trial. Both were denied without written opinions. Moran again raised the questions in his petition for appeal to the Supreme Court of Virginia. That petition was denied without elaboration (see Appendix A).

ARGUMENT

In Coolidge v. New Hampshire, 403 U.S. 443 (1971), this Court discussed the "plain view" exception to the warrant requirement at length. As noted therein, "plain view" is often misunderstood because "in the vast majority of cases,

any evidence seized by the police will be in plain view, at least at the moment of seizure." 403 U.S. 443, 465 (emphasis in the original). In order for a seizure to be justified as being made as a product of the "plain view" doctrine without a warrant justifying the initial intrusion, as here, the government must legitimize "the initial intrusion that brings the police within plain view . . . by one of the recognized exceptions to the warrant requirement." Id. Thus an examination of the recognized exceptions to the warrant requirement is compelled here.

"Hot pursuit" pursuant to Warden v. Hayden, 387 U.S. 294 (1967), does not fit the facts of this case, nor does the exception concerning searches incident to arrest. See Chimel v. California, 395 U.S. 752 (1967). Under the facts of this

case there simply was no other, different explanation for the search of the bumper area of the car; the police looked there with the clear intention of discovering the contraband found in that location.

The importance of a prior justification for the intrusion cannot be overstated. As this Court noted in Coolidge:

> What the "plain view" cases have in common is that the police officer in each of them had a prior justification for an intrusion in the course of which he came inadvertently across a piece of evidence incriminating the accused. The doctrine serves to supplement the prior justification--whether it be a warrant for another object, hot pursuit, search incident to lawful arrest, or some other legitimate reason for being present unconnected with a search directed against the accused--and permits the warrantless seizure. Of course, the extension of the original justification is legitimate only where it is immediately apparent to the police that they have evidence before them; the "plain view" doctrine may not be used to

> extend a general exploratory search from one object to another until something incriminating at last emerges.

403 U.S. 443, 466.

Coolidge then presents two limits on the use of the "plain view" doctrine; one "is that plain view alone is never enough to justify the warrantless seizure of evidence." Id at 468 (emphasis in the original). The second, and the most crucial here, "is that the discovery of evidence in plain view must be inadvertent." Id at 469. "[W]here the discovery is anticipated, where the police know in advance the location of the evidence and intend to seize it, . . . [t]he requirement of a warrant to seize imposes no inconvenience whatever, or at least none which is constitutionally cognizable in a legal system that regards warrantless searches as 'per se unreasonable' in the absence of 'exigent circumstances.'" Id

at 470-71.

Here the police, as noted, had no purpose in looking under the bumper other than finding exactly what they found. A "plain view" justification is clearly inapposite. Thus the seizure here was in violation of the Fourth Amendment.

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that I have mailed three (3) true and exact copies of the foregoing Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Virginia at his office at 1101 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, first class mail, postage prepaid, on this 1st day of July, 1981.

Michael Morchower,
Counsel

VIRGINIA:

In the Supreme Court of Virginia held at the Supreme Court Building in the City of Richmond on Monday the 4th day of May, 1981.

Grey B. Moran, Appellant,

against Record No. 801905
Circuit Court No. F-80-147

Commonwealth of Virginia, Appellee.

From the Circuit Court of the City of Richmond, Division I

Finding no reversible error in the judgment complained of, the court refuses the petition for appeal filed in the above-styled case.

A Copy,

Teste:

Allen L. Lucy, Clerk

By:

Deputy Clerk

AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE

In accordance with Rules of the Supreme Court of the United States I hereby certify that I have mailed this 1st day of July, 1981, the required copies (40) of the Petition for a Writ of Certiorari to the Clerk's Office of the Supreme Court of the United States.

BY: Barbara E. Grove

Lawyers Printing Co.
P. O. Box 1654
Richmond, Va. 23219

July 1, 1981

Sworn to before me this 1st day of July, 1981.

Cynthia O. Gray
NOTARY PUBLIC FOR VIRGINIA

My Commission Expires: 8/10/84

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OCTOBER 1980 TERM

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v.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA,

Respondent.

BRIEF IN OPPOSITION TO PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA

Stacy F. Garrett, III
Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney
for the City of Richmond
John Marshall Courts Building
800 East Marshall Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

(804) 780-8045

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BRIEF IN OPPOSITION TO PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA

QUESTION PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

Was the warrantless seizure of marijuana in the instant case done in violation of the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution?

STATEMENT OF FACTS

On October 18, 1979, within the City of Richmond, Virginia, William H. Wyrick, a member of the Richmond Bureau of Police (hereinafter referred to as "Wyrick"), observed the defendant stop his 1974 Datsun automobile in front of a house located at 3006 Fifth Avenue; the time was approximately 10:30 p.m. [At that time, the defendant, a white male, was on supervised probation pursuant to a felony conviction in Henrico County, Virginia, for the Distribution of 2115 grams (approximately 4.7 pounds) of Marijuana. He received a suspended sentence.] The defendant entered the house, stayed a short while, then exited in the company of a black male. The two men entered the defendant's automobile, whereupon the defendant made a U-turn in the middle of the street, drove a short distance, made a left turn and then parked the vehicle under a street light on the right hand side of the street at the corner of Burns and Dill Road (Tr. 62-64). Wyrick followed them, and when the defendant parked

his automobile, Wyrick assumed his observation point diagonally across from the defendant's vehicle (Tr. 64). Wyrick had become suspicious of the defendant's activities due to Wyrick's two and one-half years experience as a Vice detective; his suspicions were aroused because of the time of night coupled with a white male entering the home of a black male. He thought that the defendant was planning to purchase drugs from the black man (Tr. 63-64).

The defendant exited his vehicle, went up to a house situated on the corner, then shortly returned to his automobile, which had its headlights on. The defendant stooped in front of the left front fender, reached up under the bumper and pulled out a plastic bag, which the defendant proceeded to unroll; the bag appeared to be a twelve-inch square bag (Tr. 65). From his experience, Wyrick knew that marijuana was often packaged in that type of plastic bag, so he alerted another officer, Richard L. Acampora, (hereinafter referred to as "Acampora") and told him to head towards 3006 Fifth Avenue

and that Wyrick wanted to stop the vehicle (Tr. 65-66). The defendant had already stopped his car and was in the process of parking it when Wyrick and Acampora "swooped in" on them in front of 3006 Fifth Avenue, where the defendant had driven once he re-entered his vehicle (Tr. 43, 66). Wyrick exited his vehicle and went to the passenger side of the vehicle where William E. Brown (hereinafter referred to as "Brown"), the black male, removed a clear plastic bag containing a greenish-brown plant material from inside his jacket and placed it on the floorboard of the automobile, beside his right foot. Wyrick observed this from outside of the defendant's vehicle; the side window was raised (Tr. 66). The contents of the plastic bag appeared to Wyrick to be marijuana (Tr. 67). Wyrick then opened Brown's door, reached inside and picked up the plastic bag which was by Brown's foot, and then asked Brown to step out of the vehivle. Wyrick then placed Brown under arrest for Possession of Marijuana (Tr. 67-68).

Wyrick then went to the front of the vehicle where he had earlier seen the defendant remove the plastic bag from under the bumper (Tr. 68); this was done to determine whether any additional material was present of the type that the defendant had removed earlier. Wyrick shined his flashlight in the grille section of the defendant's vehicle and saw a clear plastic baggie containing a greenish plant material (Tr. 69). It took Wyrick a while to figure out how to get the itmes out from underneath the bumper, but he finally recovered two clear plastic baggies, each containing greenish-brown plant material; he also retrieved a brown paper bag which contained two clear plastic baggies, each containing greenish-brown plant material (Tr. 69-70, 88). Wyrick did not have to remove any part of the vehicle to observe the above-described items; all he had to do was shine his flashlight on the grille (Tr. 70).

The defendant was then asked to step out of his vehicle, at which time he was placed under arrest for Possession of Marijuana with

Intent to Distribute. As the defendant exited his vehicle, Acampora found yet another clear plastic baggie with greenish-brown plant material; this baggie was sticking out from under the defendant's driver's seat (Tr. 71).

Wyrick then looked under the automobile to ascertain whether any additional contraband was similarly secreted. He observed five additional plastic bags stuck inside the rear bumper in little holes (Tr. 71); these itmes were also in plain view when a flashlight was shone upon them. They had to be forced out of the bumper, however, as they were stuffed in there (Tr. 72).

At the suppression hearing, the defendant testified that he was forty-four years old, was married and the father of a twelve year old daughter and is a life insurance agent (Tr. 18); he further testified that he was a convicted felon (Tr. 45) and that the felony conviction related to a marijuana offense (Tr. 46). The defendant also testified that he had some marijuana in his vehicle on October 18, 1979 (Tr. 21); that there was no marijuana located

inside the automobile (tr. 24); that he had picked Brown up at his house at 3006 Fifth Avenue for the purpose of selling Brown some marijuana (Tr. 38-39); that when the police came up to his vehicle, Brown had already paid the defendant for the marijuana (Tr. 40); that the marijuana that was located in the front bumper was placed there by the defendant (Tr. 24); and that the marijuana in the front and rear bumpers belonged to him (Tr. 47).

A laboratory analysis of the seized items revealed the presence of 884 grams of Marijuana, just shy of two pounds (Tr. 143-145).

ARGUMENT

The defendant argues that since the police seized his marijuana without a warrant, the seizure violated the Fourth Amendment, and thus was illegal. Such a contention is clearly erroneous.

Being a good, alert police officer, Wyrick became suspicious when he saw a white male go into the home of a black male in a black neighborhood late at night. So he began to

keep a closer eye on the defendant's activities. His two and one-half years experience as a Vice Detective caused him to have even further suspicions when he observed the defendant drive a short distance, park his vehicle, get out leaving the black male inside the vehicle, go up to a house for a short while, and then return to the vehicle, stopping in front of it to remove a plastic bag containing a plant substance from under the front bumper, finally getting back into the vehicle, carrying the plastic bag he had removed from the bumper. In addition, Wyrick knew from his experience that marijuana is often packaged in plastic bags of the type which the defendant had.

At this point, Wyrick had probable cause to believe that the defendant's automobile contained marijuana. He also had probable cause to believe that the defendant had removed a bag containing marijuana from the front bumper of the automobile.

Having the above-mentioned probable cause, under the "Carroll Doctrine," Wyrick would have

had legal justification to search the vehicle without a warrant and without knowing any additional facts. Carroll v. United States, 267 U.S. 132 (1925). But Wyrick did not do that. Instead, as the defendant was parking his automobile, Wyrick and Acampora approached the vehicle. Wyrick went to the passenger's side of the vehicle, as he had originally thought that the defendant was the buyer. Upon arriving there, he observed Brown, the passenger, secrete a plastic bag containing marijuana on the floorboard next to his foot. All during this time, Wyrick was outside of the automobile. Wyrick then arrested Brown for the Possession of Marijuana.

At this juncture, after examining what he retrieved from the floorboard next to Brown's foot, Wyrick certainly had probable cause to believe that there was marijuana in the vehicle. His suspicions of minutes earlier were now confirmed by what he had in his hands. He had probable cause. As such, he could have held the automobile and presented his known facts to

a magistrate or he could carry out an immediate search of the vehicle without a warrant. Given probable cause to search, either course is reasonable under the Fourth Amendment. Chambers v. Maroney, 399 U.S. 42, 51-52 (1970).

But Wyrick did not look inside of the automobile; instead, he went to the location on the vehicle where he had seen the defendant remove the plastic bag of marijuana: the front bumper. Once there, he did not do anything more than shine his flashlight on the vehicle's grille. That was all it took, for he was then able to see additional bags of marijuana. Although it took him a while to determine how to extricate that which he had found, Wyrick was able to seize the marijuana.

At this point, the defendant was asked to get out of the vehicle, and was placed under arrest for Possession of Marijuana with Intent to Distribute. As he was exiting the vehicle, even more marijuana was found, this time in plain view, sticking out from under the seat where he had been sitting. Then Wyrick went on

to look at the rear bumper, where a simple look revealed even more marijuana.

At his trial, the defendant vouched the record, after the trial court refused to allow him to testify as to a legal conclusion, that he had an expectation of privacy when he hid the marijuana in the bumpers. But his voucher is not legally sound. That is because courts have traditionally treated automobiles differently than other private property when such searches have been questioned. The rationale is twofold: first, the mobility of vehicles gives rise to exigent circumstances that make the warrant requirement impractical, Arkansas v. Sanders, 442 U.S. 753, 761 (1979); United States v. Chadwick, 433 U.S. 1, 12 (1977); Chambers v. Maroney, supra. at 49-50; Carroll v. United States, supra. at 153, and second, the public nature of vehicles and the history of vehicle inspection and regulation reduce the occupants' reasonable expectation of privacy. Arkansas v. Sanders, supra.; Rakas v. Illinois, 439 U.S. 128, 154 n.2 (1978); United States v. Chadwick,

supra. at 12-13; see Cady v. Dombrowski, 413 U.S. 433 (1973), where this Court said that

> "...'extensive and often non-criminal contact' with vehicles brings police into plain view of evidence, fruits or instrumentalities of crime, or contraband." at 442.

But in this case, it is most important to observe just where on the vehicle Wyrick looked for the marijuana. He did not look inside the vehicle, nor did he look in the glove compartment, nor did he look in the trunk, nor did he look in any container or package inside either the interior of the vehicle or the trunk; he looked at the bumpers of the vehicle, which can only be gotten to from the exterior of the vehicle. This Court's ruling in Cardwell v. Lewis, 417 U.S. 583 (1974), strikes home. In that case, police seized paint scrapings from the exterior of the car and examined a tire on one of the automobile's wheels. In upholding those actions done without a warrant, this Court stated that

". . . nothing from the interior of the car and no personal effects, which the Fourth Amendment traditionally has been deemed to protect, were searched or seized and introduced into evidence. . . Stated simply, the invasion of privacy, if it can be said to exist, is abstract and theoretical. . . Under circumstances such as these, where probable cause exists, a warrantless examination of the exterior of a car is <u>not unreasonable</u> under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments." 417 U.S. at 591-92. (Emphasis added.)

And such is the case here. By placing his marijuana in the bumpers of his vehicles, the Commonwealth of Virginia fails to comprehend what expectation of privacy was infringed. In fact, there could have been no legal expectation of privacy.

Wyrick acted prudently; he had probable cause, yet only seized items he saw from outside

the vehicle and he never searched the inside of the vehicle. As such, even though he did not have a search warrant, Wyrick's actions did not violate any of the defendant's Fourth or Fourteenth Amendment rights.

CONCLUSION

Since there has been no violation of any right guaranteed by the United States Constitution, the Petition for a Writ of Certiorari should be denied.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

By: Stacy F. Garrett, III
Counsel

Stacy F. Garrett, III
Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney
for the City of Richmond
John Marshall Courts Building
800 East Marshall Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

(804) 780-8045

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that forty true copies of the foregoing Brief in Opposition to Petition for a Writ of Certiorari were mailed to the Clerk's Office of the Supreme Court of the United States, and that three true copies of the same document were mailed, all postage prepaid, to Michael M. Morchower, Esquire, 13 East Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, on this 6th day of August, 1981.

Stacy F. Garrett, III